CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/1637
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LETTER DATED 25 JANUARY 2001 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A MEDIA STATEMENT ISSUED ON 17 JANUARY 2001 BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE ON THE DESTRUCTION OF SURPLUS AND CONFISCATED FIREARMS

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a media statement issued on 17 January 2001 by the South African Police Service on the destruction of surplus and confiscated firearms.

This destruction of surplus and confiscated firearms by the South African Police Service is a follow-up initiative to the destruction of redundant and obsolete small arms by the South African National Defence Force. Information on the latter destruction was distributed as document CD/1621 dated 6 July 2000.

I would be grateful if this statement could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to the delegations of all Member States of the Conference and non-member States participating in its work.

(Signed): Thomas Markram
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
Deputy Head of the
South African Delegation
to the Conference on Disarmament

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE (SAPS) DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER OF LOGISTICS: DIVISIONAL COMMISSIONER HAMILTON HLELA

BENONI, SOUTH AFRICA : 17 JANUARY 2001

STATEMENT REGARDING THE DESTRUCTION OF FIREARMS

Another significant step to rid South Africa from the scourge of firearms related violence was taken today with the destruction of 102 tons of firearms, parts of firearms and firearm spares, with an estimated value of nearly R26,5 million (US$ 3,5 million).

A total of 27 816 firearms, including pistols, revolvers, rifles, shotguns and home-made firearms were destroyed. The firearms, which were destroyed in this batch, include 4 524 confiscated and home-made firearms as well as 23 292 redundant police firearms. Seven (7) launchers and 20 336 parts of firearms and spares were also destroyed.

The destruction of confiscated firearms is the last step to be taken after completion of police investigation. No confiscated firearm will be destroyed by the SAPS unless the investigation (including forensic testing) has been completed.

Many South Africans die annually through the criminal or negligent use of firearms. This causes emotional and financial hardship in many South African homes as well as businesses and must be stopped at all cost.

It is a priority of the South African Police Service to stop the proliferation of firearms into the hands of criminals and to promote responsible firearm ownership with legal firearm owners. I believe that the Firearms Control Act, that will be implemented soon, will further assist the SAPS to reduce firearm-related violence significantly over the next few years. With the correct legislation as support and the commitment of each member of the SAPS and the community, we will make a profound impact on violent crime in the country.

We are also committed to stopping the flow of illegal firearms across our borders and many successes have been reported. During the past number of years thousands of firearms and ammunition have been destroyed in Mozambique in the different Operations Rachel. More than 12 100 firearms and nearly 104 000 rounds of ammunition have been confiscated since March 2000 in Operation Crackdown. This includes 6 229 handguns and 4 578 hunting rifles. In most cases, the serial numbers were removed, which make it difficult or impossible to trace the original owner.

A number of state departments have completed audits of the number of licensed firearms in their possession. A large number of redundant state-owned firearms have already been handed over to the SAPS for destruction as part of government s commitment to reduce the proliferation of firearms.

By destroying confiscated firearms and redundant state-owned firearms, we ensure that these firearms will not find their way into the hands of criminals.

I appeal again to all South Africans to work closely with the SAPS to eradicate illegal firearms in the country. We all must be prepared to take a giant leap towards a future where firearm violence does not pose a threat to the South African society.